

For the Little Folk.

THE CHILDREN'S CITIES.

There was a certain king who had three sons, and who, loving them all alike, desired to leave them to reign over his kingdom as brothers, and not one above another.

His kingdom consisted of three beautiful cities divided by valleys covered with flowers and full of grass; but the cities lay so near each other that from the walls of each you could see the walls of the other two. The first city was called the city of Lessonland, the second the city of Confection, and the third the city of Pastime.

The king feeling himself very old and feeble, sent for the lawyers to write his will for him, that his children might know how he wished them to behave after he was dead. So the lawyers came to the palace and went into the king's bed room where he lay in his golden bed, and the will was drawn up as he desired.

One day, not long after the will was made, the king's fool was trying to make a boat of a leaf to sail it upon the silver river. And the fool thought the paper on which the will was written would make a better boat—for he could not read it; so he ran to the palace quickly, and knowing where it was laid, he got it and made a boat of it, and set it sailing upon the river, and away it floated out of sight. And the worst of all was, that the king took such a fright when the will blew away that he could speak no more when the lawyers came back with the golden ink. And he never made another will, but died without telling his sons what he wished them to do.

However, the king's sons, though they had little bodies, because they were princes of the Kingdom of Children, were very good little persons,—at least they had not yet been naughty, and had never quarreled,—so that the child people loved them almost as they loved each other. The child-people were quite pleased that the princes should rule over them; but they did not know how to arrange, because there was no king's will, and by rights the eldest ought to have the whole kingdom. But the eldest, whose name was Gentil, called his brothers to him and said:

"I am quite sure, though there is no will, that our royal papa built the three cities that we might each have one to reign over, and not one reign over all. Therefore I will have you both, dear brothers, choose a city to govern over, and I will govern over the city you do not choose."

And his brothers danced for joy; and the people, too, were pleased, for they loved all the three princes. But there were not enough people in the kingdom to fill more than one city quite full. Was not this very odd? Gentil thought so; but, as he could not make out the reason, he said to the child people:

"I will count you, and divide you into three parts, and each part shall go to one city."

For, before the king had built the cities, the child-people had lived in the green valleys, and slept on beds of flowers.

So Joujou, the second prince, chose the city of Pastime; and Bonbon, the youngest prince, chose the city of Confection; and the city of Lessonland was left for Prince Gentil, who took possession of it directly.

And first let us see how the good Gentil got on in his city.

The city of Lessonland was built of books, all books and only books. The walls were books, set close like bricks, and the bridges over the rivers (which were very blue), were built of books in arches, and there were books to pave the roads and paths, and the doors of the houses were books, with golden letters on the outside. The palace of Prince Gentil was built of the largest books, all bound in scarlet, and green, and purple, and blue, and yellow. And inside the palace all the loveliest pictures were hung upon the walls, and the handsomest maps; and in his library were all the lesson-books and all the story-books in the world. Directly Gentil began his reign, he said to himself:

"What are all these books for? They must mean that we are to learn, and to become very clever, and to make my people so; so I must set them a good example."

And he called all his child-people together, who would do anything for the love of him, and he said:

"If we mean to be of any use in the world, we must learn, learn, learn, and read, read, read, and always be doing lessons."

And they said they would, to please him; and they all gathered together in the palace council chamber, and Gentil set them tasks, the same as he set himself, and they all went home to learn them, while he learned his in the palace.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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